



Representative **Tom Petri** Reports to The Sixth District

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BIG CHANGES IN WASHINGTON

BY REPRESENTATIVE TOM PETRI

Now that control of the U.S. Senate has changed hands, we can expect gridlock to be broken and many of the President's initiatives—previously approved by the House—finally to be signed into law.

Of course, nothing will be automatic. Senate rules allow a determined minority to stop legislation if it can muster the support of 41 out of the 100 senators. That's a good thing because it encourages compromise and an end result that's closer to the middle of the road. But no longer will the previous majority be able to block President Bush and the House majority simply by refusing to consider their proposals.

The first result of the changes in the Senate was an end to the impasse over the creation of a Department of Homeland Security. Although the November "lame-duck" session was an extension of the 2001-2002 Congress, the Senate's leaders knew that they would have to surrender control in January, and so decided to approve the new department along lines the

President could accept, instead of insisting on further negotiations.

The President is preparing an economic stimulus bill and a plan to simplify the tax code. The changes in the Senate mean that we can expect a vigorous debate and timely votes instead of having proposals blocked by hostile committee chairmen who cut off discussion.

The highly successful 1996 welfare changes expired at the end of September and are continuing only thanks to a stop-gap temporary extension. The House has approved a comprehensive extension, but the Senate stalled throughout the 2001-2002 Congress, with the intention of rolling back some of the requirements which have helped to move recipients back into the world of work. With the incoming Senate leadership, welfare reform will be invigorated and allowed to continue over the long term.

The House approved prescription drug coverage earlier in 2002, but the Senate blocked it, with the old leaders charging that the House

plan wasn't generous enough and taking the position that it's better to have no loaf rather than half a loaf. Now, finally, we can expect help for those who need it most.

For the President, a key change will be that his judicial nominees will get proper consideration. The old Senate leaders had blocked highly qualified nominees, often refusing even to hold hearings in the Judiciary Committee on the President's recommendations. Now, at last, the nominees will get a vote on the Senate floor.

Of course, the changes in Washington have, to some extent, been mirrored in Madison. With the Republican majority having been restored in the State Senate, a major source of gridlock and obstruction has been removed.

Governor-Elect Doyle is promising to work with the legislature, and I'm eager to work with him as well as we try to make sensible policy decisions and bring a fair share of federal resources to our state.

A BETTER CAMPAIGN REFORM

President Bush signed the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform bill into law on March 27, 2002, and you may have thought that you'd heard the last of the subject for a while. Not so.

The new law will help to restrain large corporate "soft money" donations to political organizations which, many believe, have improperly influenced government policies and corrupted the political process. It also interferes—perhaps unconstitutionally—with free speech during campaign seasons which, of course, are the times when free speech counts the most. Accordingly, I supported McCain-Feingold with some ambivalence, and look forward to the resolution of various court challenges.

I have long thought that there is a better approach to campaign finance reform and have introduced my own proposal.

Most, I think, would agree that the ideal way to finance political campaigns is through a broad base of supporters, but the economic realities of modern-day campaigning virtually oblige many candidates and political parties to focus most of their efforts toward collecting funds from a few large donors. This reality alienates many Americans from our political system and leads to the now-familiar charge that politicians are "bought and paid for" by special interests.

While the new McCain-Feingold reform

focuses on limiting the impact of large contributions, other reforms have been designed to make it easier for small donors to play a role. For example, from 1972 to 1986, the federal government offered a tax credit for small political contributions. This offered an incentive for average Americans to contribute to campaigns in small amounts while simultaneously encouraging politicians to seek financial support from a larger, more diverse pool of potential supporters.

The word "pool" is particularly apt here, since

the key advantage of numerous small donors is that their varied interests and concerns dilute the influence of large contributors.

Ten geographically and politically diverse states currently offer their own tax credits or deductions for political contributions. These state-level credits differ in many respects, but all share the same goal of encouraging average Americans to provide a counterweight against "fat cats" and special interests. The federal tax credit, however, was eliminated by the 1986 tax overhaul. My bill, the Citizen Involvement in Campaigns (CIVIC) Act, would bring it back in an updated form.

Under my proposal, taxpayers could choose between a 100 percent tax credit for political contributions to federal candidates or parties (limited to \$200 per year) or a 100 percent tax deduction (limited to \$600 per year). Both limits would be doubled for joint returns. As long as political parties and candidates promote the use of credits and deductions, the program can have a real impact.

Of course, many reformers say that the best way to pay for campaigns would be through public financing rather than private contributions of any size. An advantage of my plan, however, is that it encourages taxpayers to contribute to the campaigns they actually support—without also being forced to fund, through the treasury, candidates they abhor.



Rep. Petri discussed his campaign reform bill, the Civic Involvement in Campaigns Act, at a June 25 forum in Washington sponsored by the American Enterprise Institute.

Come to Rep. Petri's Town Meetings! See page 4.

Congressional Accomplishments

With the 107th Congress now adjourned, here are some of the things we accomplished over the past two years,

✓ **Homeland Security Act:** Congress has established a new Department of Homeland Security dedicated to the government's top priority—the protection of Americans at home. The new department will bring 22 security-related agencies under one roof in order to strengthen the coordination of the 177,000 employees who will work there.

✓ **Domestic Defense:** The Patriot Act was approved in the days following the September 11th attacks. This law enhances foreign intelligence surveillance tools, strengthens control of our borders, improves law enforcement sharing information to fight terrorism, enhances penalties for terrorism, broadens the definition of terrorist acts and protects against the abuse of new police powers.

✓ **Airport Security:** The Aviation and Transportation Act of 2001 ensures uniform standards for airport security and helps provide the safest possible environment for American travelers on planes, at airports and on trains.

✓ **Education Reform:** The high priority given to education at the start of the 107th Congress was demonstrated when the "No Child Left Behind" plan was given the bill

designation "H.R. 1." The resulting law improves education for every child in America by holding schools accountable to parents, providing states and local school districts with unprecedented new flexibility as long as positive results can be demonstrated, and giving new choices to parents.

✓ **Education Savings Accounts:** The new law will allow parents to invest up to \$2,000 annually in ESAs (up from \$500) and permits tax-free withdrawals from ESAs to pay for both college tuition and K-12 education expenses.

✓ **Tax Relief:** The 2001 tax cut law is providing across-the-board tax rate reductions, marriage penalty relief, death tax relief, a doubling of the Child Tax Credit, and a \$10,000 Adoption Tax Credit. Many say we can't afford to let Americans keep more of what they earn, but virtually every serious analyst admits that the tax cuts arrived just in time to shorten the recession.

✓ **Corporate Accountability:** The new corporate fraud accountability law provides up to 20 years of jail time for corporate crooks who inappropriately shred documents or who otherwise obstruct justice. The law also provides

criminal penalties for retaliation against whistleblowers and creates a new "Securities Fraud" crime which can result in fines or imprisonment for up to 25 years for those who seek to defraud investors.

✓ **Comprehensive Retirement Security and Pension Reform:** This new law allows Americans to set more aside in IRA or 401(k)-type plans, modernizes pension laws and provides regulatory relief to encourage more small businesses to offer retirement plans.

✓ **Veterans Benefits:** The Veteran's Opportunities Act targets additional funding and assistance to veterans and their survivors most in need, such as disabled veterans who require specifically adaptive housing or automobiles.

✓ **Election Reform:** The new law provides funds to states to replace punch card voting systems, establishes the Election Assistance Commission to assist in the administration of federal elections, and provides assistance with the administration of certain federal election laws and programs. It also establishes minimum election administration standards for states and units of local government.

✓ **Campaign Finance Reform:** The new law helps to restrain large corporate "soft money" donations to political organizations which, many believe, have improperly influenced and corrupted the political process.



In August, Rep. Petri joined with Connecticut Senator Chris Dodd to announce a bipartisan effort to make sure that textbooks are available in Braille for blind students in a timely way.

Let Me Help

Have you ever tried to get help from the federal government? No representative can order agency officials around, but with the help of my staff it's often possible to get answers from federal bureaucracies where citizens have found only silence or confusion. Here are some examples of my recent casework successes:

Problem: A recently discharged veteran wanted to use his Montgomery G.I. Bill benefits but the military's finance records did not show that he had made the required \$1,200 contribution from his pay while in the service to qualify. He asked me for help in getting the benefits he deserved.

Solution: My office contacted the Army to verify that he had made the payments. After checking their records, Army officials admitted that an "administrative error" had resulted in their database not reflecting his contributions. Now, however, they requested an additional \$100 payment with no further explanation. A more thorough investigation prompted by my staff's follow-up inquiry revealed that demand to be erroneous as well.

Subsequently, the records were corrected and the Department of Veterans Affairs notified us that this veteran was, in fact, due his educational benefits as he had claimed from the beginning.

Problem: An elderly couple on Social Security was also receiving Supplemental Security Income benefits. Because SSI is a joint federal-state program, there were two separate SSI direct deposits each for the husband and wife each month. When they changed banks the account numbers became mixed up and both of the federal SSI payments were going to the husband and both of the state SSI payments were being deposited into the wife's account. They asked for my help in straightening out their accounts.

Solution: My staff contacted the local Social Security office with the correct account numbers and other pertinent details. The necessary corrective action was taken to reroute the electronic payments to the right accounts.

Problem: A constituent had been appointed conservator of his brother's finances and had discovered several uncashed government checks in his name dating back to 1946. The checks represented tax refunds, a dividend from the Veterans Administration and a small paycheck from the Defense Department. He sought my assistance in seeing if the checks could be reissued.

Solution: One of my caseworkers made inquiries with the Defense Department, Department of Veterans Affairs and the Internal Revenue Service. A statute of limitations prevented the reissuance of the \$7 paycheck. However, the tax refunds and the veterans dividend were both reissued and sent to the conservator for his brother.

Problem: A local funeral director needed to know the procedures and international requirements to arrange for the return of a recently deceased individual to Poland. He wasn't sure where to turn for the information and contacted my office for assistance.

Solution: My staff was able to provide the appropriate contact information for the Polish Consulate in Chicago so he could obtain the necessary permits and documents.

High School Students: Service Academies Want You!

It's not too early for high school juniors to start thinking about seeking appointment to the U.S. service academies – the Military Academy at West Point, NY; the Naval Academy at Annapolis, Md.; the Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, Colo.; and the Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, NY.

Nominations are based solely on the recommendations of an independent, bipartisan selection committee comprised of 6th District citizens. Those seeking nomination for the 2003-2004 school year should contact one of my offices listed in this newsletter. Also, information and computer links to the academies' Web sites can be found in the Academy Page section of my Web site located at:

www.house.gov/petri/academy.htm

Hard Work on Highways Subcommittee

Now that the 107th Congress has ended, I'm happy to report that we have had a productive two years on the Highways and Transit Subcommittee, where I am the Chairman.

America's economy depends on efficient transportation to move both people and products. In 2000, the cost of traffic congestion nationwide totaled \$78 billion resulting from 4.5 billion hours of extra travel time and 6.8 billion gallons of fuel wasted while sitting in traffic. The average rush hour trip takes 32 percent more time than the same trip taken during non-rush hour conditions.

For communities like ours in central Wisconsin, transportation improvements are essential. When our roads are blocked by traffic or slowed by narrow lanes and roundabout routes, our manufacturers lose the ability to compete with those who are closer to their suppliers and markets.

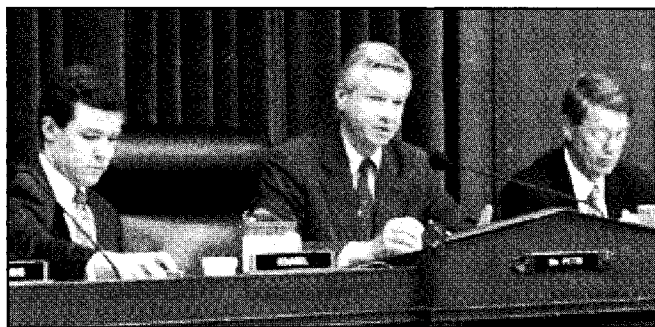
Federal funds for highways are raised through a user tax included in the price of gasoline. Working with the full Transportation Committee, I've had to fight a constant battle to prevent the federal Highway Trust Fund from being raided to pay for unrelated activities. I think my successes in this area have been good for us all.

My main concern in recent months has been to prepare for next year's major, multibillion dollar transportation bill. To do the best job for Wisconsin and America as a whole, we have to make sure that transportation money is distributed fairly and is devoted to projects based on legitimate needs. We also need to find the right balance between roads and public transportation and to promote the use of technological innovations which can make travel safer and more efficient.

Fairness, in fact, is one of the main reasons why I sought appointment to the Transportation Committee in the first place. From the beginning of the federal highway program in the 1950s until the early

1980s, Wisconsin received only about 70 cents back of every dollar in gasoline taxes our drivers sent to the Federal Highway Trust Fund.

During my time on the committee, I've helped to raise our share of funds to approximately one dollar



Rep. Petri chaired a hearing of the Highways and Transit Subcommittee on September 19. At this hearing, the subcommittee listened to testimony concerning the upcoming reauthorization of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21).

back from the trust fund for every dollar our drivers deposit. That has meant hundreds of millions of additional dollars for our state, thousands of well-paying highway jobs, and the growth of transportation-dependent manufacturing and other jobs in our state.

With scheduled revisions of the nation's transportation programs coming up, I will be fighting to make sure that we continue to receive our fair share of funds.

Due to the war, transportation security has also been a major concern of my subcommittee. Accordingly, we fashioned the Over-the-Road Bus Security and Safety Act, which the House approved in early November. The Senate, however, failed to act before

adjourning for the year.

This proposal would have authorized \$99 million in the current budget year to help prevent driver assaults and other forms of violence and terrorism on intercity and tour buses, which transport 774 million passengers annually. I intend to work with the new Senate to get this important program underway.

Because pipelines transport oil and gas over state lines, my subcommittee had the responsibility to help create the Pipeline Infrastructure Protection to Enhance Security and Safety Act, which has just been approved by the full Congress. Few people spend much time worrying about the natural gas and oil pipelines which crisscross the country, running under our streets and past many of our backyards. After all, pipeline accidents are rare—but they have considerable destructive potential.

Among other provisions, our bill will increase penalties for safety violations and criminal damage, improve certification standards and training for pipeline personnel, require tougher inspection programs in populated areas, and create a program for the research, development and demonstration of safer pipelines.

The Highways and Transit Subcommittee also held numerous hearings over the past two years to learn about concerns which may require future legislation. For instance, we have looked into safety and security issues surrounding the transportation of nuclear waste.

We have also studied fraud and other problems in the household goods moving industry, considered highway workzone safety and the use of cell phones by drivers.

Finally, in September we received testimony on the need to strengthen the procedures which states follow when issuing drivers licenses in order to prevent their use by terrorists, and also by other criminal enterprises and individuals.



In August, Rep. Petri, the Vice Chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, received the "Friend of Independent Higher Education Award" for his work in Congress. Pictured, left to right, are: Richard Ridenour, President of Marian College of Fond du Lac; Rolf Wegenke, President of the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU); David Williams, President of Ripon College, Ripon; Rep. Petri; Fr. Robert Wild, President of Marquette University, Milwaukee, and Chair of the WAICU Board; and Stephen Gould, President of Lakeland College, Sheboygan.

GIVE IRAQ NO CHOICE

Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein has labored intensively to build chemical and biological weapons stockpiles and to acquire nuclear weapons. But, does that give us the right to invade a sovereign nation simply because we think those weapons might be used against us or our allies?

Maybe. Maybe not. There are times when gentlemanly behavior is more dangerous than force.

After its defeat in World War I, Germany accepted a treaty obligation to keep its military out of the Rhineland, although this region continued to be part of the nation as a whole, with a civilian administration. The creation of this demilitarized zone was designed to make it difficult for Germany ever again to threaten France, Belgium or the Netherlands.

The Germans considered the treaty unfair, and on March 7, 1936, Adolf Hitler's army marched across the Rhine River bridges to re-establish military positions facing the Reich's western neighbors.

At that early date, the German army was hopelessly weak compared to the French military. Hitler later admitted that if the French had asserted its treaty rights and determined to eject the Wehrmacht, Hitler's government would likely have collapsed. "The 48 hours after the march into the

Rhineland were the most nerve-racking of my life," he said.

But the French did nothing beyond sending a formal protest to the League of Nations. The British urged the French "not to make the situation more difficult." It was, after all, German territory.

And the rest, of course, is history.

On June 7, 1981, Israeli jets destroyed Iraq's Osirak power plant, then under construction. The New York Times editorialized: "Israel's sneak attack on a French-built nuclear reactor near Baghdad was an act of inexcusable and short-sighted aggression."

The Israelis explained that Iraq intended to use the reactor to build nuclear weapons. This didn't satisfy the Times, however, which said that since the Israelis had a nuclear capability, they could hardly complain if Iraq created one as well.

Currently, of course, it is generally acknowledged that without the Israeli attack, Iraq would have been a nuclear power well before its 1990 invasion of Kuwait which resulted in the Persian Gulf War. Saddam Hussein would have succeeded in his ambition of heading a regional superpower, with a stranglehold over a huge portion of the oil supplies that fuel the world's economies.

Today, Saddam Hussein—one of the world's bloodiest dictators—continues to seek out the world's most horrifying weapons in violation of the agreements which ended the Gulf War. His links to Al Qaeda terrorists are unclear, but he is clearly an enemy with great potential for destruction in our country as well as his own neighborhood.

Even so, I have no appetite for a war with Iraq. War is what we are trying to avoid—although not at any cost.

There are circumstances in which the United States must act unilaterally to protect ourselves, but we should do our best to avoid it. This is why I continue to emphasize the importance of working through the United Nations and the international community to force Iraq to disarm.

Over the past 10 years, however, it has become clear that the only way to get Saddam to cooperate is to give him no choice. Accordingly, on October 10th I voted to give the President broad authority to act.

Following Congress' demonstration of resolve the President has won UN support for a tough inspections program and has gained broad backing from the NATO countries. This all leads me to hope that if we carry a big enough stick, we won't actually have to use it.



Rep. Petri participated in a live interview November 13 with KFIZ Radio's Joe Scheibinger who was visiting Washington with several Fond du Lac residents. The discussion centered around what it is like to live and work in the nation's capital while debating legislation and crafting public policy.

Keeping in Touch

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to call or write. In addition to the usual "old fashioned" addresses and numbers on page 1, you can contact me by e-mail. Due to the high volume of messages coming to my old e-mail address from all over the country, I am now asking everybody from the 6th District to use the form linked to the front page of my Web site found at

www.house.gov/petri/

This form filters out "spam" e-mail, which can number in the hundreds or thousands on any given day. When writing by e-mail, please include your name and postal address to guarantee a response.

Also, for those who would like to hear from me more frequently, I put out an occasional e-mail newsletter discussing issues currently receiving attention in Congress. If you would like to be added to my e-mail distribution list, drop me a note via my Web site as explained above.

Internships for College Students

Would you like to learn more about our federal government—especially how Congress really works? If so, you might consider an internship in my Washington office. Interns in my office are unpaid, but I cooperate with schools that are willing to offer credit for the experience. The work required is not complicated, but it is important and provides a chance to get a first hand look at Congress and government service.

For further information, check my Web site at
www.house.gov/petri/intern.htm

Representative Tom Petri's January 2003 TOWN MEETINGS SCHEDULED

Town Meetings Scheduled

During the 107th Congress I spent 190 days working in Wisconsin, held 42 Citizen Hours in 21 cities, hosted 42 Town Meetings in 21 locations, and made 498 stops in 90 cities and towns.

Citizen Hours provide an opportunity to meet one-on-one with individuals who need help with Social Security or veterans benefits, who want to ask for help getting into the U.S. Military Academies, who want privately to discuss problems with farm programs, with the Internal Revenue Service and the like, or who simply want to express opinions about issues of national concern. My most recent series of Citizen Hours was held in May at 14 locations, and there will be a new round later this year. As always, if it is more convenient for you or if your concerns are pressing, feel free to contact my Fond du Lac, Oshkosh or Washington offices.

Town Meetings, as opposed to Citizen Hours, provide opportunities to discuss national issues in a group setting. My latest round of town meetings will take place from January 14 through January 22 at 12 locations throughout central Wisconsin. Please come and express your opinions!

TUESDAY, JANUARY 14TH

3:00 - 4:00 p.m.—**NEENAH**
City Hall, 211 Walnut Street
City Council Chambers

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15TH

9:30 - 10:30 a.m.—**GREEN LAKE**
Caestecker Public Library
518 Hill Street, Conference Room

11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.—**OSHKOSH**
City Hall, 215 Church Avenue
Room 406

MONDAY, JANUARY 20TH

9:00 - 10:00 a.m.—**ADAMS**
Adams County Library
101 South Main Street
Meeting Room

1:00 - 2:00 p.m.—**WAUTOMA**
Waushara County Job Center
205 East Main Street
Conference Room

3:00 - 4:00 p.m.—**MONTELLO**
Marquette County Courthouse
77 West Park Street
County Board Room

TUESDAY, JANUARY 21ST

10:00 - 11:00 a.m.—**FOND DU LAC**
City-County Government Center
160 South Macy Street
Legislative Chambers

2:00 - 3:00 p.m.—**BEAVER DAM**
Beaver Dam Community Library
311 North Spring Street
Welsh Meeting Room

4:00 - 5:00 p.m.—**WATERTOWN**
Watertown Public Library
100 South Water Street
Room #1

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22ND

10:30 - 11:30 a.m.—**SHEBOYGAN**
Mead Public Library
710 North 8th Street
Rocca Meeting Room

2:30 - 3:30 p.m.—**TWO RIVERS**
City Hall, 1717 East Park Street
City Council Chambers

4:30 - 5:30 p.m.—**CHILTON**
City Hall, 42 School Street
City Council Chambers